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SOME TRIALS OF PRIVATE NURSING

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THERE is one benefit which accrues from a free discussion of nursing problems, which is that truth glints out from it as sparks from an anvil. Perhaps some of our profoundest impressions come to us indirectly. In our enthusiasm, however, to stir up a better spirit and better work among nurses, it would seem a mistake to minimize their real hardships, or to create in the minds of patients a suspicion that they receive undue remuneration. To the nurse who throws herself unsparingly into her work there can hardly be too high a reward, considering her difficulties, the future to be provided for, and the actual giving of her very life in this willing service. This is not saying that she should not adhere to the strictest business principles and the regulation fee. Woe betide her if she does not; otherwise she must suffer for it, especially since those who have trespassed have brought such nursing offences before the notice of the laity and thereby done great harm to the profession and given cause, also, to the commercial mind to be on the alert.

There is such a complicated variety of individuals with their circumstances on *both* sides—on the side of nurses and of those among whom they minister—that the proper adjustment of relations between the two sometimes appears to be a forlorn hope. On the part of the nurse there are trials which call for physical endurance. These have a practical bearing on health and the length of the nursing career. It certainly is difficult to work well on an empty stomach, and yet occasionally a nurse does find upon entering a house a total ignoring of her presence, till she is forced to ask for food and rest. One is reminded of a cartoon which forcibly illustrates this situation of affairs. A timid English nurse, with ties to her cap, confronts an exceedingly corpulent hostess, with “specs” on top of her head and arms akimbo. “What hours am I to have for sleep?” the meek one asks. The reply is given with astonishment, “Why, I thought you were a *trained* nurse!”

One could give instances of a nurse ordering her meals ahead. But we are not now speaking of exacting nurses, only of the trials of those devoting their energies to the care of the sick in their homes. There is the starting out into the unknown, after a strenuous effort to pack, in an incredibly short time, everything that will be needed for the length of stay. Arriving weary from the journey, work often begins at once. How necessary that the nurse should be fortified to meet the strain

which must be put upon her for the first few days and nights. She takes many risks which other professions do not call for. If registered, she is expected to accept any cases to which she has subscribed which may be appointed her by the doctor or bureau—the latter not always infallible; and she may chance to find herself in quarters from which she would like to escape—not because of hard work, but because of the questionable lives of the people. True, these instances are rare, and there is protection in knowing the doctor whose patient one is expecting to nurse. But one must be prepared for any fate, accepting it cheerfully and heroically. That this is done with no thought of recognition is true, let us hope, of the majority of nurses. We do not pretend to deny that there are some who look out first for their own welfare. The world is full of selfish people—not limited to nurses. There are selfish patients also, and relatives of patients, who do not want to see the change for better things in the profession, nor those progressive movements which have given us a better quality of woman for nurse. Rather they would abide by her status as fixed and handed down by former generations.

This brings to mind some of the even more disagreeable trials of the nurse who is a well-bred woman. At best and among considerate people she feels herself a foreign element in the household, and shrinks from obtruding herself into the family circle, knowing that she is a reminder of sickness of all sorts. But she does not wish to have her meals with Eliza, the maid, for all that, nor to be classed with inferiors either in the home, the hotel, or when travelling. Some women feel decidedly out of their element under such circumstances, and that a strict formality and reserve is far better than any attempt to cover up little pretensions on the part of the family that the nurse is being given her rightful place, while all the time she is not. However much she may be actuated by high motives, she cannot help at times, if she is of gentle birth herself, being keenly alive to the anomalous position she often thus holds socially. Apart from the isolation and loneliness of it all there must be some heart-burnings which are not at all snobbish. It may be that in the evolution of professional interests a more independent way of exercising her profession will come to light,—house-to-house visiting,—or the badge of honor which the title R. N. will one day become may distinguish the nurse before the laity as a person of good family, education, and ability—worthy of being acknowledged in that state of society to which her antecedents rightly entitle her. But there will always be a diversity in the demand and supply so long as there is a corresponding multifariousness in the mass of individuals composing human society: people of wealth with no refinement, high-born families with no means, the selfish and exacting ones distributed generally throughout the whole

number. All these conditions are the more trying because of the beautiful and tender relations which may exist between patient and nurse if only the right spirit inspires both to noble deeds and gracious forbearance. It is comforting to think that these relationships do exist as largely as they do. And it is to be hoped that as brotherly love continues, with the desire to give and to share, these unpleasant phases, which every nurse with a large clientele must have experienced, will pass away.

A NEW CRANFORD: BEING A MORE OR LESS TRUE ACCOUNT OF AN EXPERIMENT

**DEDICATED TO OUR DEAR J. B., WHO OF ALL OTHERS BEST
UNDERSTANDS WHAT PROMPTED ITS UNDERTAKING**

By ISABEL McISAAC

Late Superintendent of the Illinois Training-School, Chicago

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IV. SOME EXPERIENCES WITH HENS, INCUBATORS, AND OTHER THINGS

WHEN we made our first plans about Cranford Euphemia was filled with enthusiasm about chickens and began a violent course of reading about poultry. The papers she had seemed to me to be printed on poor paper and filled with advertisements for incubators, patent poultry food, washing machines, and diamonds at a dollar a month, illustrated with stout ladies in their Sunday clothes doing the family wash and stouter ladies with much pompadour setting off the diamonds, while the hens were all as big as ostriches, as the combined results of incubators and patent food.

I called Euphemia's attention to these points, but it did not dampen her ardor, and her enthusiasm waxed stronger while she learned to fling incubators and bone-grinding machines into her parts of speech with that same glibness with which a medical student adorns his conversation with minute anatomy.

Later she suddenly realized that poultry to be profitable must be killed and sold, which had not occurred to her at first and which put her into a serious dilemma, for since her earliest days she has been a regular Hindu about animals; no beast was ever ugly enough in looks or manners to alienate her affections, and to sell or kill would spoil her life. After much serious reflection she decided to name them after all